

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

# The Merchant of Venice



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# **The Merchant of Venice**

**William Shakespeare**



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### **about the author**

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-on-Avon, England, the third child of John Shakespeare, a well-to-do merchant, and Mary Arden, his wife. Young William probably attended the Stratford grammar school, where he learned English, Greek, and a great deal of Latin.

In 1582 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. By 1583 the couple had a daughter, Susanna, and two years later the twins, Hamnet and Judith. Somewhere between 1585 and 1592 Shakespeare went to London, where he became first an actor and then a playwright. His acting company, The King's Men, appeared most often in the Globe theatre, a part of which Shakespeare himself owned.

In all, Shakespeare is believed to have written thirty-seven plays, several nondramatic poems, and a number of sonnets. In 1611 when he left the active life of the theatre, he returned to Stratford and became a country gentleman, living in the second-largest house in town. For five years he lived a quiet life. Then, on April 23, 1616, William Shakespeare died and was buried in Trinity Church in Stratford. From his own time to the present, Shakespeare is considered one of the greatest writers of the English-speaking world.





William Shakespeare



# The Merchant of Venice



Antonio



Portia



Shylock



Nerissa



Bassanio



## The Merchant of Venice

*Men came from everywhere to try to marry the beautiful Portia—rich men from France, England, and Germany. But she could accept only the man who passed her father's test.*



*Perhaps the prince of Morocco would win her. Or perhaps it would be a handsome young man from Venice.*



## POCKET CLASSICS



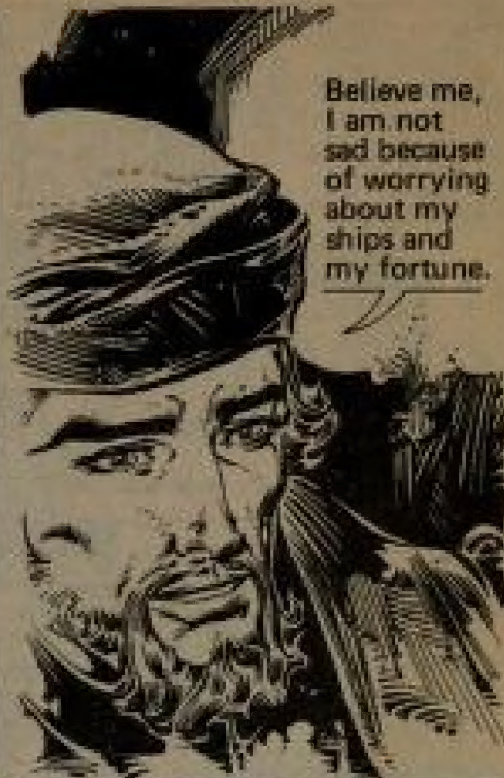


## The Merchant of Venice

No, no! My fortune is spread out on many ships in many places. Not all of them could be lost at once!



Believe me, I am not sad because of worrying about my ships and my fortune.



Why, then you are in love!

No, that's not it either.



Then you are sad just because you aren't happy!





## POCKET CLASSICS





## The Merchant of Venice



Then I'll play the part of a fool. Let my wrinkles come from laughing and talking instead of being sad!



Some men are known for their wisdom because they keep quiet. But if they spoke, they'd be called fools like me!

Well, I must be one of them, because Gratiano never gives me a chance to speak.



But we must leave you. Come, Lorenzo.

Goodbye, friend.

Gratiano speaks more and says less than any other man in Venice!



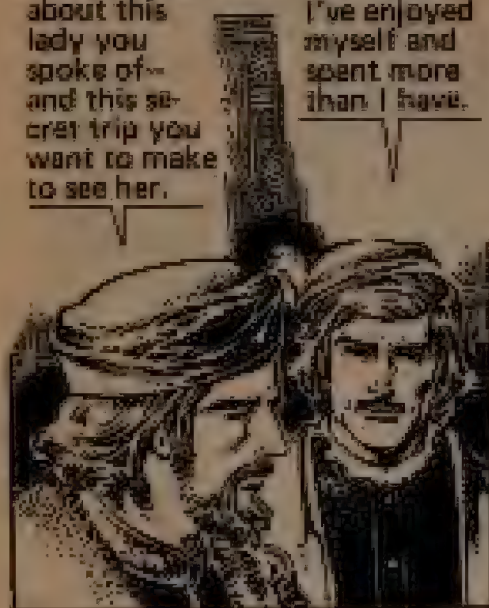
# POCKET CLASSICS

Now, tell me about this lady you spoke of-- and this secret trip you want to make to see her.

Well, you know that I've enjoyed myself and spent more than I have.

I owe a lot of money, and most of it to you! But I have a plan for paying everything back.

Tell me about it, Bassanio. I will do everything I can to help you.



There is a rich young lady in Belmont named Portia. She's beautiful, too, and good!

The word about her has spread, and men sail in every day to try and win her.

I met her once . . . and I could see in her eyes that she liked me.



## The Merchant of Venice

Now, Antonio, if I had the money to go to Belmont and try my luck, I think I could win her love.

You know that all my money is tied up in my ships and their cargoes—but my credit is good.



Use it to borrow as much money as you need, and I will soon repay it!

Thank you, Antonio!



*Meanwhile, in Belmont, the heiress Portia talked with her maid, Nerissa.*

Nerissa, I'm bored with everything in the world!

I suppose people with too much money can be as sick of it as those who have nothing.





## POCKET CLASSICS

But is it fair that a living daughter should be controlled by the will of a dead father?



I'm not allowed to refuse a husband I don't like, or to choose one I do like!

But your father was a wise and holy man.



When he ordered your suitors to choose among these three chests . . . one gold, one silver, and one lead . . . he must have known how to pick the right husband for you.



*Before he died, Portia's father had set up the plan using the three chests. Inside one of them Portia's picture was hidden. To marry her, a suitor had to choose the right chest.*

## The Merchant of Venice

How do you feel about the men who have already come to court you?

Well, first there's the prince from Naples.



He talks of nothing but his horse and how he can shoe him himself.



How about the Count Palatine?

He does nothing but frown! I'd sooner marry a skull with a bone in its mouth!



What about the Frenchman? Or the young Englishman? Or the man from Scotland?

I don't like any of them.





## POCKET CLASSICS

Well, how do you like the young German duke?

Not at all in the morning when he is sober. . . and even less in the afternoon when he is drunk!



Well, don't worry. All of them are giving up and going home.

I'm glad of that.



Do you remember, in your father's time, a young man from Venice who came here?

Yes, I think his name was Bassanio.



He seemed to be the best of all of them!

I remember him well, and I agree!



## The Merchant of Venice



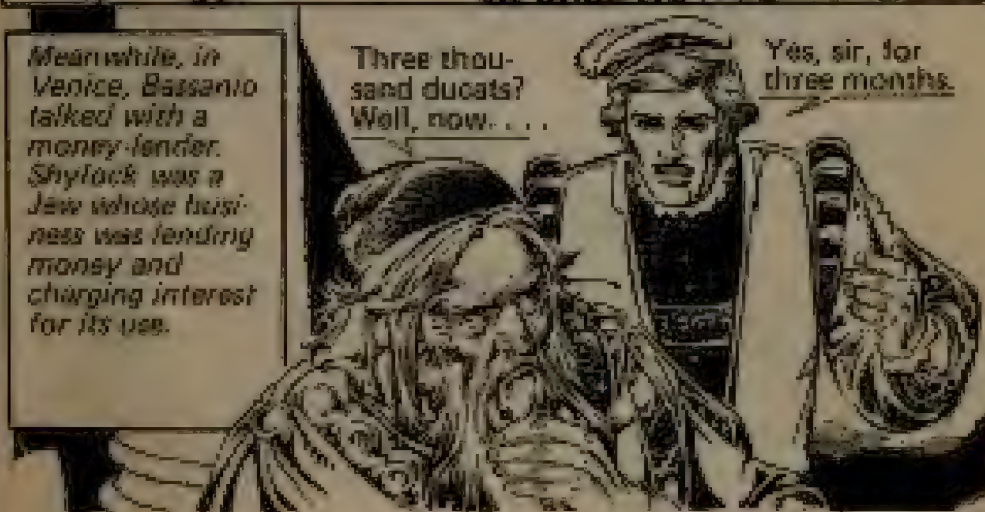
The last four men who came to win you wish to say goodbye.



Meanwhile, in Venice, Bassanio talked with a money-lender. Shylock was a Jew whose business was lending money and charging interest for its use.

Three thousand ducats? Well, now...

Yes, sir, for three months.





# POCKET CLASSICS



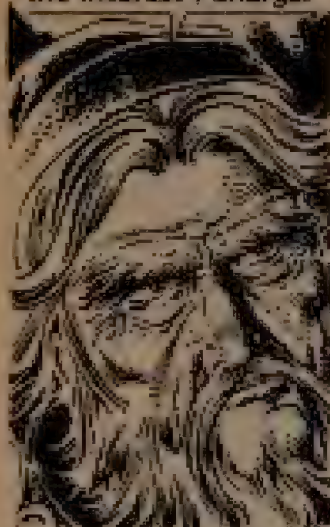
## The Merchant of Venice





## POCKET CLASSICS

Signior Antonio,  
many times you  
have called me names  
in public for the  
money I lend and  
the interest I charge.



You've done this  
just because I  
choose to use my  
wealth this way.



Now you need my  
help. You ask me  
for money. What  
should I say?



I'm not asking as a  
friend. This is busi-  
ness, and I will pay  
you for its use!



Don't be angry!  
I will lend you  
the money  
without interest!

That is  
kind!



## The Merchant of Venice

Of course it is. Come with me to a notary and we'll make it legal.



And as a joke, if you don't repay me on the agreed day, you'll give me a pound of your flesh to be cut from whatever part of your body I wish.



I'll agree to that. My ships will be in a month before the money is due!



No, no! I won't hear of it.



POCKET CLASSICS

Why won't you trust me, Signior Bassanio?



It's all right, Bassanio. Perhaps the Jew will grow kind enough to become a Christian!

I will meet you at the notary's office.

I still don't like it!



## The Merchant of Venice

*While these things were happening, the prince of Morocco arrived at Portia's house.*

I hope you won't dislike me for my dark skin. I come from a land that is close to the sun.

I don't judge by my eyes. Whoever wins me by my father's test is fair enough to me.

Thank you for that! Then lead me to the chests to try my luck.

You may do that after dinner. But did you know that you must make a promise?

You must swear that if you choose wrong, you will never marry another lady.

I'll swear it!



## POCKET CLASSICS

*At the same time in Venice, a servant of Shylock's named Launcelot Gobbo was trying to make up his mind.*

Should I run away?  
The devil tells me  
to go.



But my conscience  
tells me to stay  
with my master,  
the Jew.



I like the devil's  
advice better.  
I'll run!



Young man, please  
tell me which is  
the way to Master  
Jew's.



It's my old blind  
father! I'll play a  
joke on him!

## The Merchant of Venice



Take the next  
right, then the  
next left, then  
don't take any  
turns at all.



Can you tell me if there's a  
Launcelot that lives there?

Do you mean  
young Master  
Launcelot?



No master, sir,  
but a poor  
man's son. His  
father's poor,  
but very honest.

That  
Launcelot's  
dead and  
gone to  
heaven.



What? I need  
him in my  
old age!

Don't you  
know me,  
Father? I  
am your  
son!



# POCKET CLASSICS

I can't believe it! Are you sure?

Yes, I am Launcelot, the Jew's servant, the son of your wife Margery!



Then you are my son. Well, I've brought your master a present. Do you get along well?

No, I'm running away. Give it to Signior Bassanio. I want to work for him.



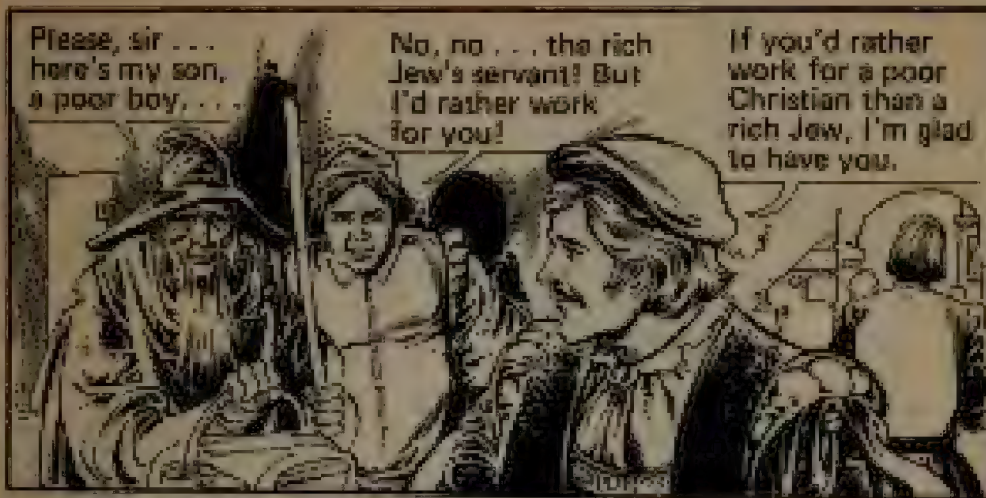
Just then Bassanio and Leonardo came by.

See that supper's ready at five o'clock. And ask Gratiano to come to my house later.

What luck! Here's Bassanio now. Tell him, Father.



## The Merchant of Venice



*As Bassanio sent Launcelot off to Shylock's to give notice, Gratiano arrived.*





## POCKET CLASSICS

*When Launcelot went back to Shylock's house, he told Shylock's daughter Jessica that he was leaving his job.*

I am sorry you are going.  
Your funny ways have  
made this sad house better.



Here is a ducat  
for you. To-  
night at supper,  
you will see  
Lorenzo, your  
new master's  
guest. . . .



Please give  
him this let-  
ter. Do it  
secretly.

You are such a  
beautiful, sweet  
Jew. I am sure  
a Christian will  
marry you  
someday.



## The Merchant of Venice

*When he left and Jessica was alone. . .*

I am ashamed to be my father's child. But his ways are not my ways.



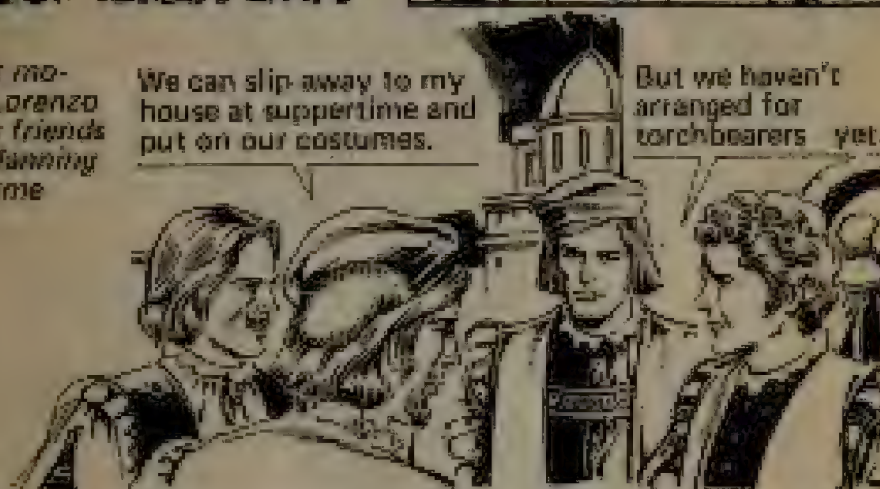
If Lorenzo keeps his promise, I'll leave all this. Then I'll become a Christian—and his loving wife!



*At that moment Lorenzo and his friends were planning a costume party.*

We can slip away to my house at suppertime and put on our costumes.

But we haven't arranged for torchbearers yet.



*Just then Launcelot came in and gave Jessica's letter to Lorenzo.*

Good news! I have just found a torchbearer for tonight.

How could you? Isn't that letter from the lovely Jessica?





POCKET CLASSICS

Yes, it is. She is running away, and we will be married tonight. Here, Launcelot—tell Jessica that I'll be there!



Thank you, sir. Now I must go and ask my old master the Jew to dine tonight with my new master Bassanio.



Soon Launcelot reached Shylock's house.

Jessica, I'm invited to supper with the Christians. I don't want to go, but I must!



Go inside. Lock up the doors and windows tight! I have a feeling that something awful is going to happen!

## The Merchant of Venice



Dear Lorenzo, I am ashamed to be seen dressed this way!

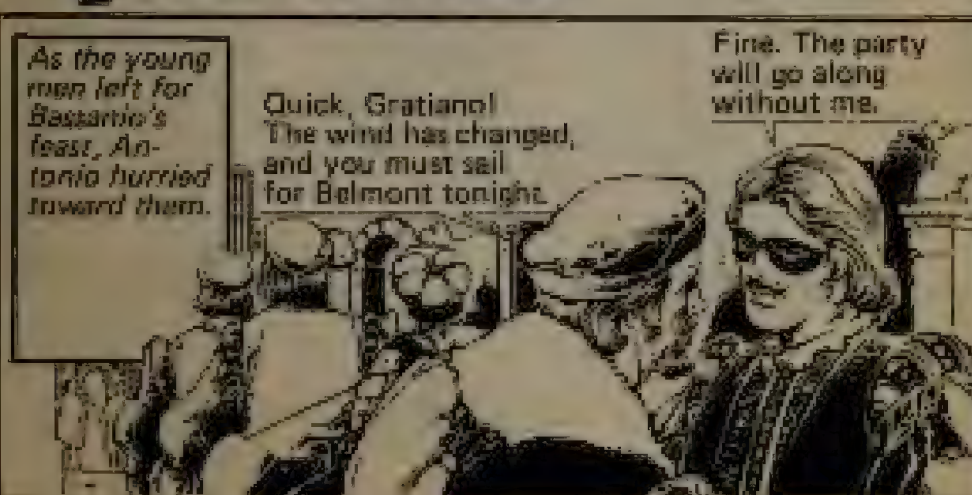
Don't worry, my sweet. You must be my torchbearer. No one will know you in that outfit!



*As the young men left for Bassanio's feast, Antonio hurried toward them.*

Quick, Gratiano! The wind has changed, and you must sail for Belmont tonight.

Fine. The party will go along without me.





## POCKET CLASSICS

*Meanwhile, at Portia's house in Belmont, the prince of Morocco was taking his chance to win Portia as his wife.*

Here are the chests, noble prince.

I will read the writing on each one.



The first, of gold, says: "Who chooses me shall gain what many men desire."



The silver promises: "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves."



And this dull lead chest? It warns: "Who chooses me must give and risk all he has."



## The Merchant of Venice

How do I know if I've chosen the right one?

One of them holds my picture. If you choose *that* one, I am yours!



Risk all I have for lead? Never! The silver . . . as much as I deserve? That's the lady!



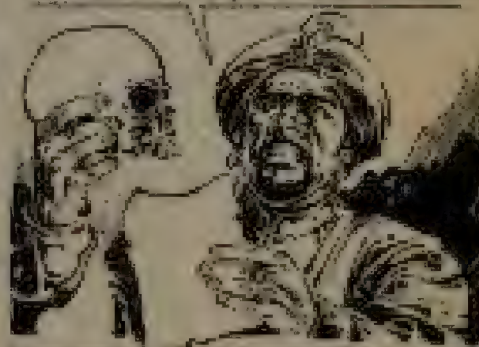
Let's read the gold again: "What many men desire. . . ."  
*That's the lady!*  
I choose the gold!

Here's the key, Prince. Open it.



*The prince opened the chest and found a skull inside. He read the scroll that was with it.*

"All that glitters is not gold . . . fare you well, your wish is cold!"



*At that, all the prince could do was leave.*



# POCKET CLASSICS

Meanwhile, Bassanio had set sail for Belmont. Back in Venice, Salerio and Solanio talked about the latest news.

I saw Bassanio and Gratiano on the ship, and I'm sure that Lorenzo was not with them.

Well, Shylock thought he was! He brought the duke of Venice with him to search it.



But he was too late. The ship was already under way. Besides, Lorenzo and Jessica had been seen somewhere else in a gondola together!

And Antonio swore they were not on his ship.

"My daughter and my money," he kept shouting, "stolen by a Christian!"



Shylock was so angry—you should have heard him!

He blames Antonio. Antonio had better be careful to pay what he owes Shylock.

## The Merchant of Venice

A Frenchman told me yesterday he saw an Italian ship sunk in the English channel. I hope it wasn't one of Antonio's.

You'd better tell him about it.

Meanwhile, in Belmont, the prince of Arragon was ready to make his choice for Portia.

I have promised three things. I must never tell anyone which chest I chose; remain unmarried all my life if I choose wrong, and leave at once if I fail.

Yes, everyone must swear those things.

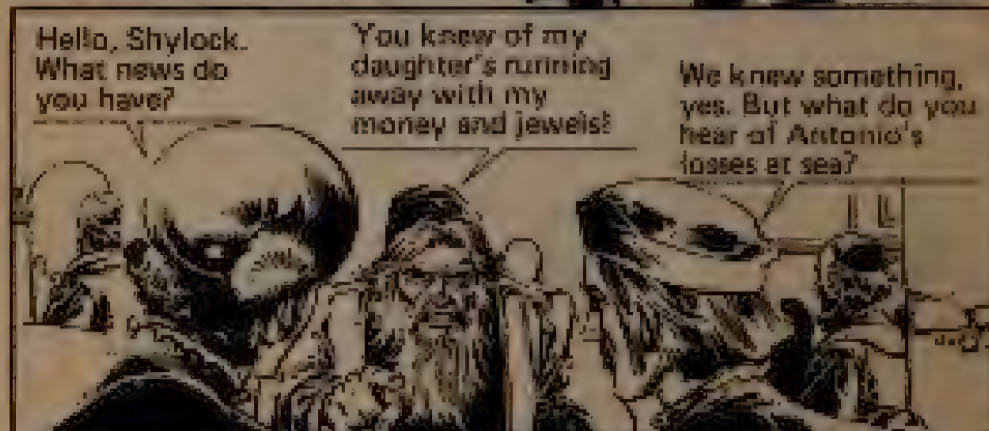
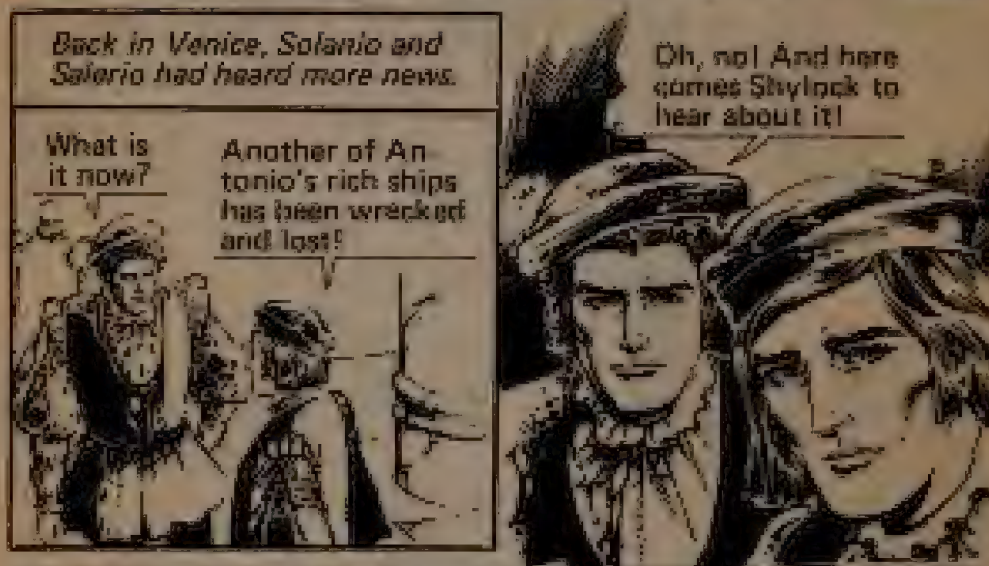
Not the gold . . . not the lead . . . I'll choose the silver, which promises as much as I deserve!

Open it.

The picture of a fool! Do I deserve no more than a fool's head? Well, so much for my hopes.



# POCKET CLASSICS



## The Merchant of Venice

He will soon  
be bankrupt!  
Let him look  
to the bond  
he gave me!



But surely, if  
he can't pay  
you, you  
won't take  
his flesh?  
What's that  
good for?

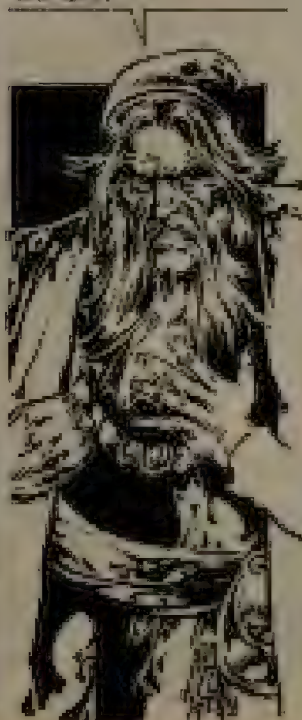
If it's good for nothing else, it  
will at least be good revenge.  
He has laughed at me and made  
fun of me . . . all because I am  
a Jew.



Doesn't a Jew feel  
the same heat and  
cold and hunger as  
a Christian?



If you cut us, don't  
we bleed? If you  
poison us, don't  
we die?



And if you wrong us,  
shall we not take  
revenge? If we are  
like you in the rest,  
we are also like you  
in that!





# POCKET CLASSICS

The bad things  
you have taught  
me I will carry  
out . . . and I will  
even try to out-do  
my teachers.



*At that point,  
a servant of  
Antonio's  
came by.*

My master Antonio  
is at home and  
wishes to speak with  
you both.

Good! We've  
been looking  
for him.



*As Salerio and  
Solanio left, a  
friend of Shy-  
lock's drew  
near. He was  
Tubal, another  
Jew.*

What news, Tu-  
bal? Have you  
found my  
daughter?

I have news of her  
from several places,  
but I haven't found  
her.



## The Merchant of Venice

And she is spending money everywhere. One night in Genoa she spent eighty ducats!

I shall never see my gold again!



But other men, too, are unlucky. Another of Antonio's treasure ships was sunk!

Well, that's good. Find me an officer. I'll have Antonio's heart if he can't pay me on time!



Meanwhile, in Belmont, things were happier. Bassanio had arrived at Portia's and the two young people had fallen in love. But Bassanio still had to pass Portia's father's test.

Wait a few days, Bassanio. If you choose wrong, then I must lose you!

No, let me choose now. I can't stand the suspense of waiting.





## POCKET CLASSICS

*So everything  
was made  
ready for  
Bassanio to  
choose.*

My picture is locked  
in one of them. If  
you love me, find it.

One must not judge by  
appearance alone.  
Even a coward may  
have a brave heart  
upon his chin.



So I won't choose the bright  
gold . . . or the silver.



I choose the plain lead,  
whose dull outside  
promises nothing.



## The Merchant of Venice

*Bassanio raised the lid . . . and found Portia's picture!*

*Fair lady, your picture! But I won't believe I've won you until you tell me so.*

*This house, these servants, and myself are yours, Bassanio!*



*Then Portia took a ring from her finger.*

*I give them to you with this ring. Never part with it as long as you love me.*

*It will leave my finger only if I am dead!*



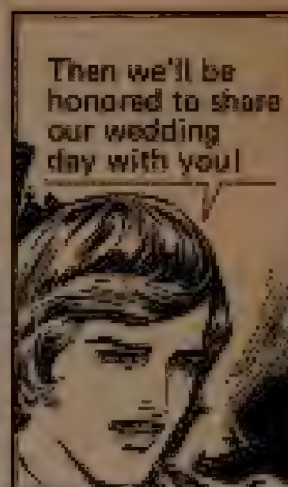
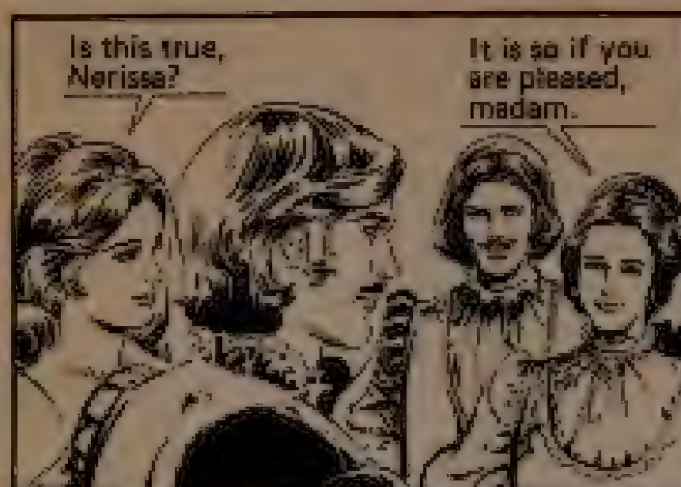
*After this, Gratiano stepped forward.*

*I wish you joy . . . and beg that Nerissa and I may be married at the same time you are wed.*





# POCKET CLASSICS



*Meanwhile, Salerio had sailed to Belmont with a letter from Antonio. Meeting Lorenzo and Jessica, the runaways, he brought them with him.*



## The Merchant of Venice

Only some awful news  
... a dear friend dead  
... could turn Bassanio  
so pale!



All Antonio's ships  
have been lost at sea.  
His debt to Shylock  
is overdue, and Shy-  
lock demands his  
pound of Antonio's  
flesh!



You must hurry to your  
friend and give him the  
money he needs. I will give  
it to you myself!

Alas, I've heard my  
father swear he would  
rather have Antonio's  
flesh than twenty times  
the value of his debt!





## POCKET CLASSICS

First come to the church to be married . . . Nerissa and Gratiano too.



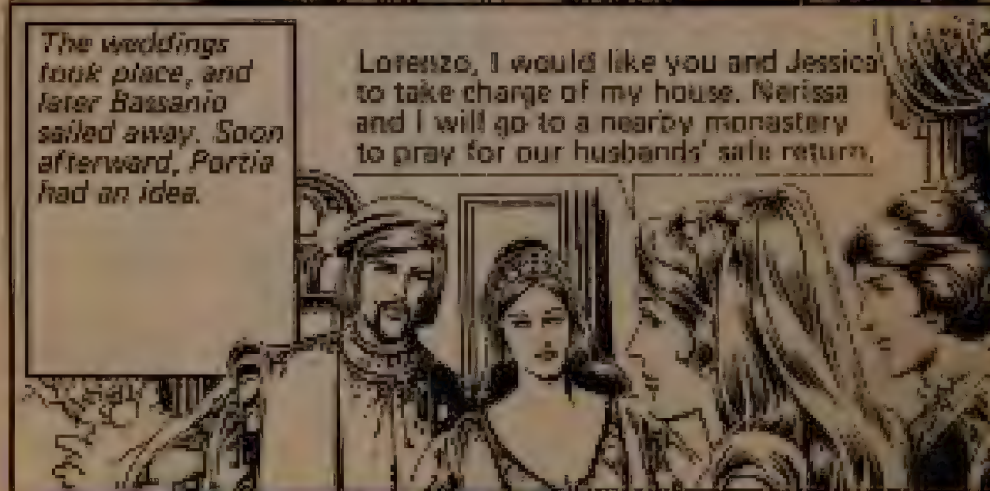
Then you must sail for Venice with enough gold to save your friend.

I'll do it . . . and hurry back to you.



*The weddings took place, and later Bassanio sailed away. Soon afterward, Portia had an idea.*

Lorenzo, I would like you and Jessica to take charge of my house. Nerissa and I will go to a nearby monastery to pray for our husbands' safe return.



## The Merchant of Venice

*Then Portia sent a letter to her cousin in Padua.*

Take this quickly to my cousin, Doctor Bellario.



Then bring the notes and clothes he gives you and meet me at the ferry for Venice. We'll be there before you.



Come, Nerissa! We'll see our husbands before they expect it.

Will they see us?



Yes, but they won't know us! And when we are dressed as young men, I'll bet I'll make the handsomer fellow!





# POCKET CLASSICS

*Soon, in a courtroom in Venice, the trial to decide Antonio's fate began.*

Shylock, you have sworn to take the pound of this man's flesh to which the law entitles you. I think, in this last hour, you will show mercy.

No. I have sworn to have a pound of his flesh—and I will have it!



But here are six thousand ducats for your three thousand!

If you offered me thirty-six thousand, I would not take them!

If I told you to let your slaves go free, you wouldn't do it! I bought this pound of flesh, and I won't let it go free!



It's no use. Let him have his way.



## The Merchant of Venice





## POCKET CLASSICS

*The duke sent for the young man. Portia entered, disguised as the lawyer Balthasar.*

You are welcome. Do you know this case?

Yes, very well. Which is the merchant and which the Jew?

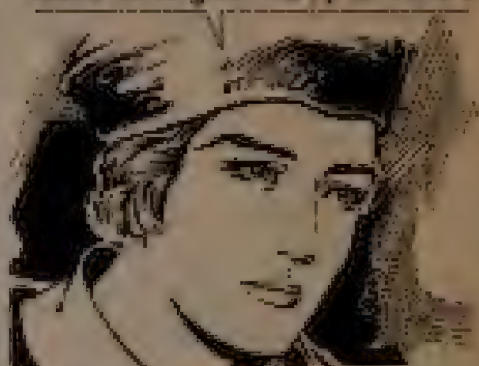
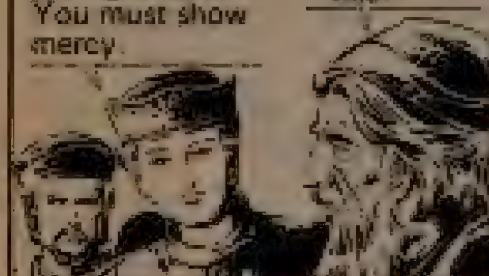


*Antonio and Shylock were identified. Portia spoke to Shylock.*

Your case is strange . . . but by law you have the right to it. You must show mercy.

And why must I? I want justice!

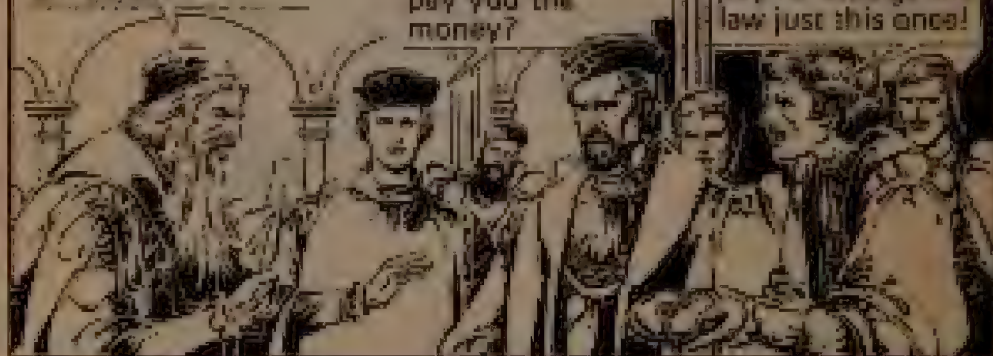
With only justice, none of us would ever be saved. We all pray for mercy, and that should teach us to give mercy to others!



No! I want what I am owed!

Isn't he able to pay you the money?

Yes, it's here! I'll pay it! Change the law just this once!



## The Merchant of Venice

No power  
can change  
the law. It  
cannot be.

What a wise  
young lawyer!



Let me look  
at the bond.

Here it is,  
here it is!



This bond is overdue, and law-  
fully this Jew may claim a pound  
of flesh . . . to be cut off nearest  
the merchant's heart.

Then let  
me do it!  
I am  
ready!

And so  
am I.



Antonio, open your  
shirt. Shylock, do  
you have scales here  
to weigh the flesh?

I have  
them  
ready.





## POCKET CLASSICS

Goodbye, Bassanio. Tell your good wife how I loved you. I am not sorry to pay this for you.

My wife is as dear to me as life itself. But I would give all I have to save you.

Your wife would not thank you for that offer.



So, Shylock, prepare to cut off the flesh. But you must understand one thing.

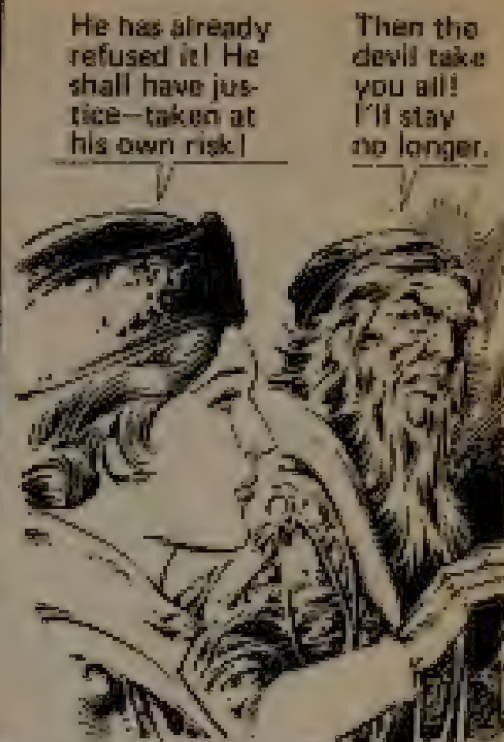
You are not allowed to shed any blood. There is nothing in the bond about blood.

But... that's impossible!

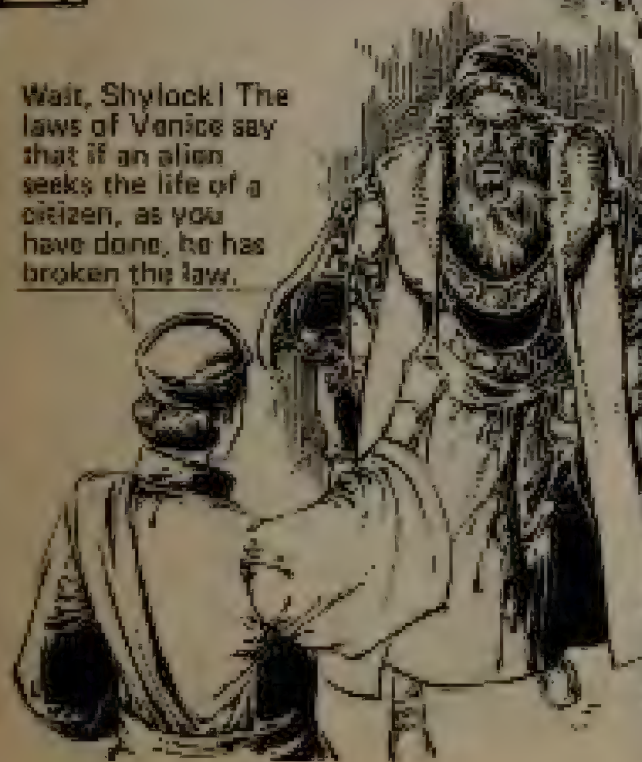
If one drop of his blood is shed, all your wealth will be taken away and you will die!



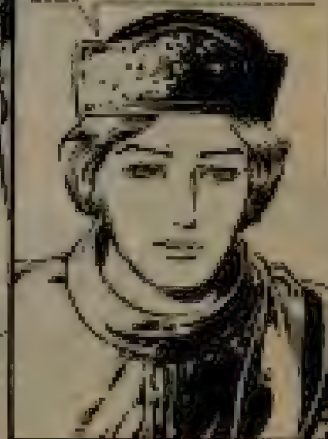
## The Merchant of Venice



Wait, Shylock! The laws of Venice say that if an alien seeks the life of a citizen, as you have done, he has broken the law.



Half his property goes to the one whose life he plotted against. The other half goes to the state. And his life itself lies at the mercy of the duke.



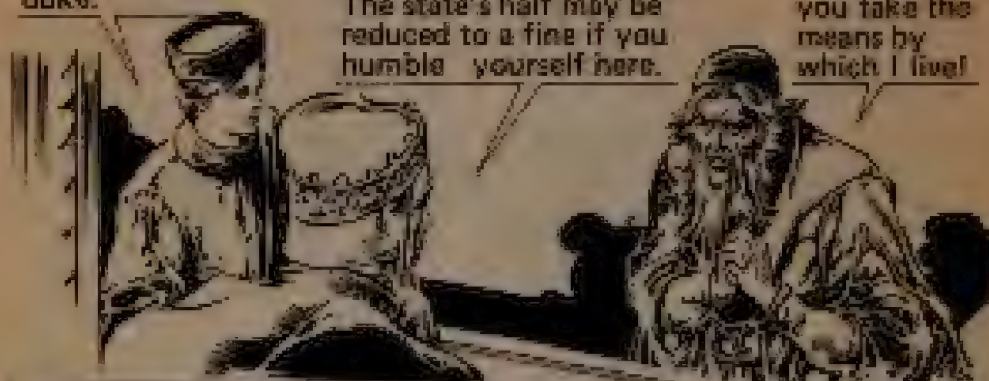


## POCKET CLASSICS

All this is true of you. Beg for mercy from the duke.

I give you your life. Half your wealth is Antonio's. The state's half may be reduced to a fine if you humble yourself here.

No. You take my life anyway if you take the means by which I live!



What mercy will you show him, Antonio?

I will be content to use my half only during his lifetime, if he wills it and all he owns to Lorenzo and his daughter when he dies. And he must become a Christian as well.

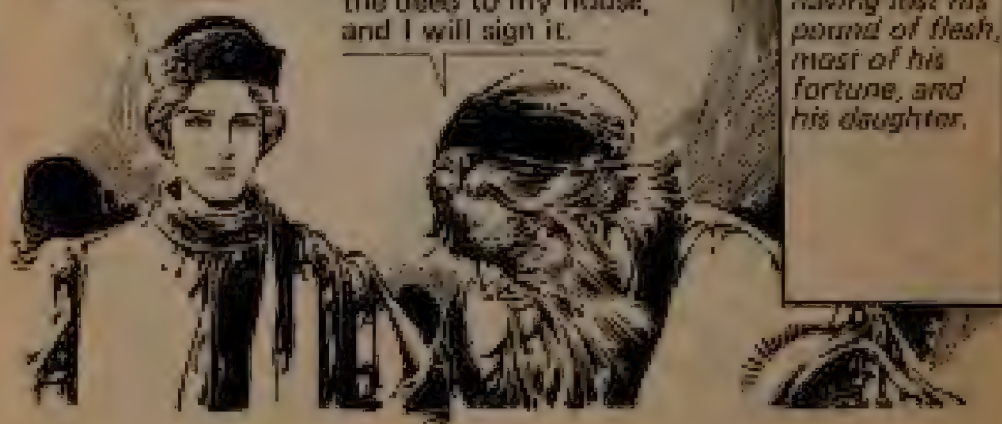
He shall do this, or I will take back my pardon.



What do you say, Shylock?

I agree. I beg you to let me leave. Send the deed to my house, and I will sign it.

*So Shylock left the court having lost his pound of flesh, most of his fortune, and his daughter.*



## The Merchant of Venice

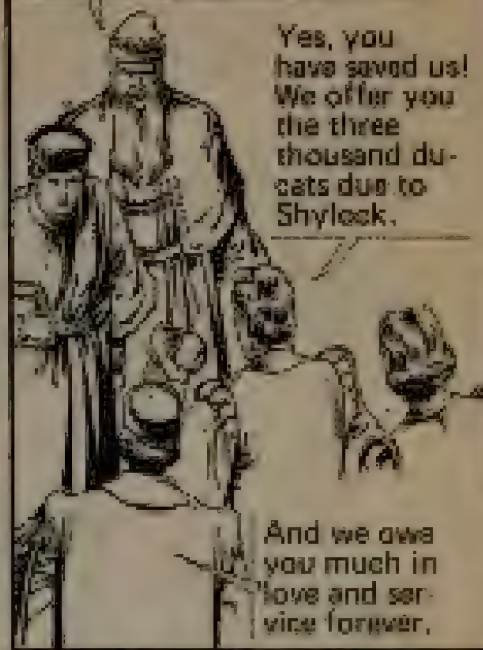
Sir, do come home with me to dinner.

Thank you, but I must start this very evening for Padua.



Antonio, you owe this gentleman much! Reward him.

Yes, you have saved us! We offer you the three thousand ducats due to Shylock.



And we owe you much in love and service forever.

I don't want anything. I am happy knowing I have saved you.

But please . . . take something . . . if only to remember us by.



All right. Give me your gloves. And also this ring you wear.

This ring? It's nothing! I'll get you something better . . . the best ring in Venice!





# POCKET CLASSICS

You offer much . . . but when I ask, you refuse me.

Good sir, my wife gave me this ring, and I swore I'd never part with it.



Your wife would forgive you, knowing how much I deserved the ring. But never mind. Goodbye!



Please, Bassanio, he deserves so much from us . . . let him have the ring.

Yes! Take the ring and run after him, Gratiano. Hurry!



*Outside, Portia and Nerissa searched for Shylock's house.*

We'll have Shylock sign this deed. Then we'll hurry home before our husbands arrive.

Here comes Gratiano with your ring. I'll see if I can get my husband's ring which he swore to keep forever!



## The Merchant of Venice

*Meanwhile, in Belmont, the happy newlyweds were enjoying a moonlit night.*

On such a night did Jessica run from Venice to Belmont with her love.

On such a night did Lorenzo swear he loved her well and stole her heart.



*Then a messenger arrived.*

I bring word that lady Portia will be here before daybreak. Has my master returned?

He has not. Let's go in and prepare a welcome.



Hello, hello! Here's a message from my master. He'll be here before morning.

Then why go inside? Bring the musicians out here to welcome our friends when they return.





## POCKET CLASSICS

*Soon Portia and Nerissa arrived.*

How beautiful everything looks by moonlight!

Even the music sounds sweeter than by day.

Welcome home, dear lady.



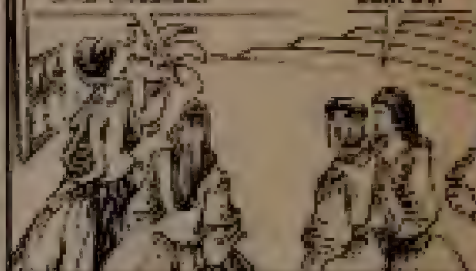
We've been away praying for our husbands' safety. Have they returned?

Not yet, but a messenger says they are almost here.



Go in, Nerissa. Tell the servants not to say we've been away. You, too, Lorenzo and Jessica.

Don't worry; we'll keep your secret.



*Just then Bassanio arrived with Antonio and Gratiano.*

Welcome home!

I thank you. Please welcome my friend Antonio!



## The Merchant of Venice

*But in the  
midst of the  
greetings, a  
quarrel  
broke out.*

I swear by the moon  
there . . . I gave it to  
the lawyer's clerk!

I don't believe  
it. You gave it  
to a pretty girl!

A quarrel  
already?  
What's the  
matter?



A ring she gave me  
. . . only a plain  
gold circle. . .

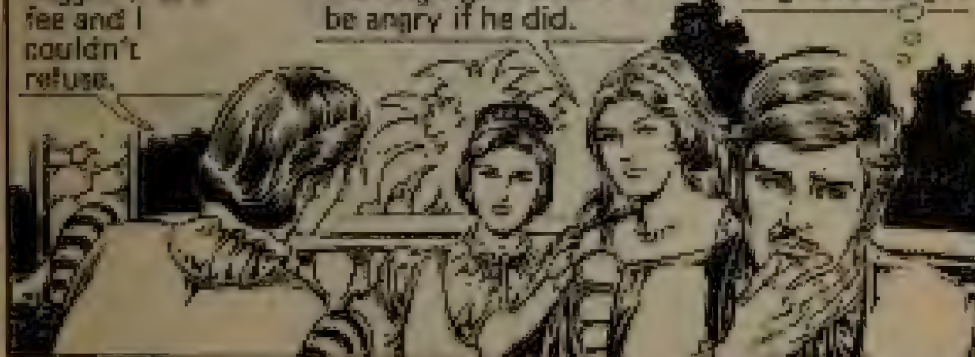
You swore you'd wear it  
till your death! "Gave it  
to a lawyer's clerk!" I  
don't believe it.



It's true . . . a  
boy . . . no  
taller than  
yourself! He  
begged it as a  
fee and I  
couldn't  
refuse.

You were wrong, Gra-  
tiano! Bassanio swore  
he'd never part with  
the ring I gave him. I'd  
be angry if he did.

I'd best cut off  
my hand, and  
swear I lost the  
ring defending it!





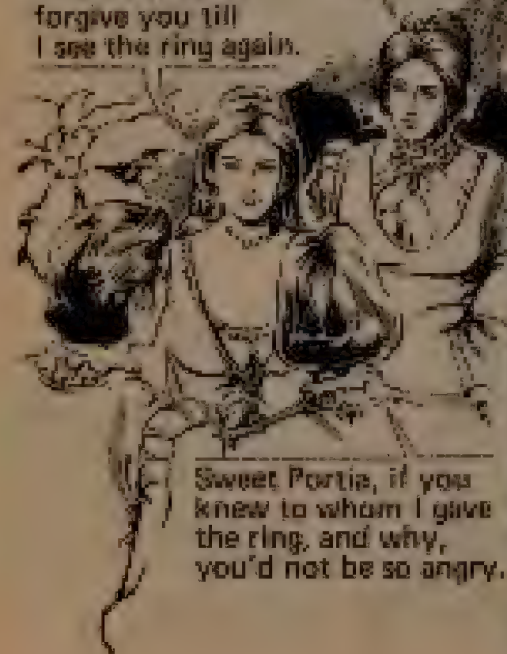
## POCKET CLASSICS

Bassanio gave his ring to the lawyer who asked for it—and deserved it, too! And his clerk, the boy, begged for mine. They'd take nothing else.



Just as truth is gone from your heart! I'll never forgive you till I see the ring again.

Nor I, till I see mine.



Sweet Portia, if you knew to whom I gave the ring, and why, you'd not be so angry.

If you had explained the special meaning of the ring, no man would have taken it. I think like Nerissa . . . some woman has it!



No, I swear to you—no woman, but a lawyer.

## The Merchant of Venice

He saved the life of my dear friend and refused all other fees. If you'd been there, you'd have given him the ring yourself.



If you'll forgive me this fault, I swear by my soul I'll never again break a vow to you.



I once risked my body for Bassanio—and would have lost it except for him who has your ring.



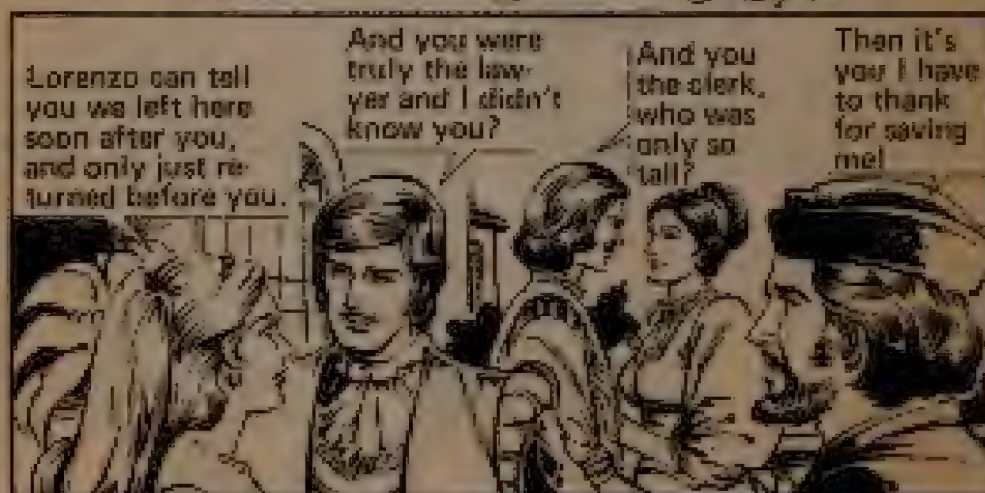
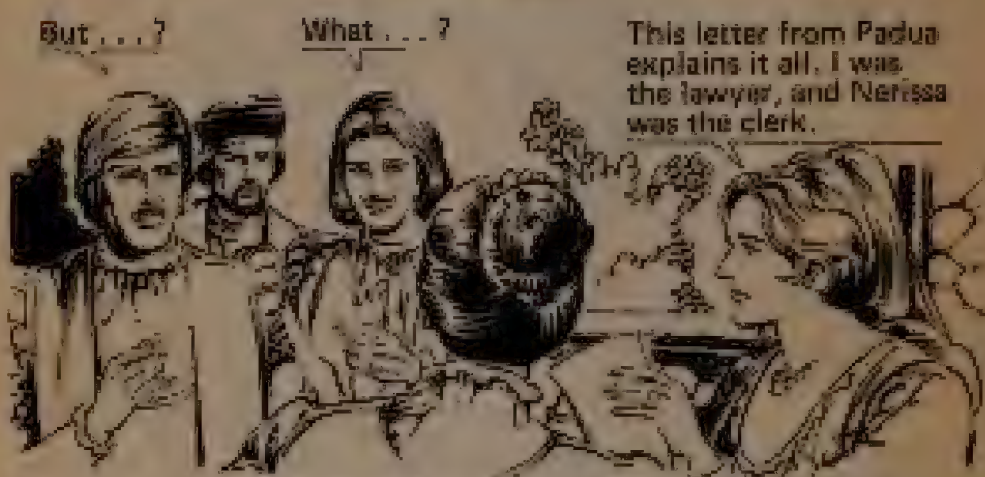
And now I'll risk my soul that Bassanio will never again break faith with you!

Then you shall be his guarantee. Give him this, and tell him to keep it better than the other.





# POCKET CLASSICS



## The Merchant of Venice

And take this letter, Antonio. It says that three of your richest ships have returned safely.

Sweet lady, you've given me life again!



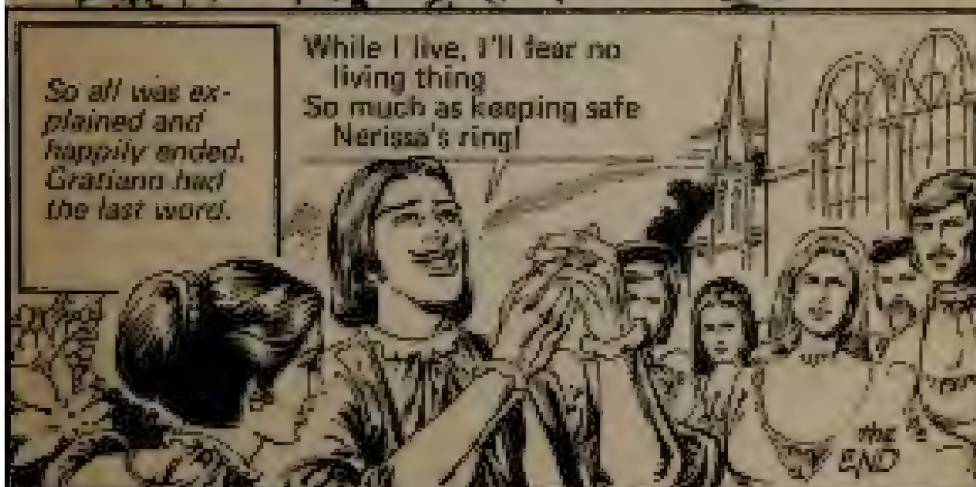
And for you and Jessica, here is a special deed that gives you all of Shylock's money after his death.

Fair lady, this is like food to starving people!



So all was explained and happily ended. Gratiano had the last word.

While I live, I'll fear no living thing  
So much as keeping safe Nerissa's ring!







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POCKET



# The Merchant of Venice

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